

# Components of Grant Proposals

## **Outreach Programs/Community Development/Social Change**

<p><b>Need/Problem Statement</b></p>	<p>What is the problem or need you want to fix? Why is it significant? What are the broad impacts?</p> <p>For instance, parent engagement. Quantify the problem. “Only 227 (57%) of a total of 400 parents attended parent-teacher conferences in the last two academic years. School surveys show that 65% of parents did not help their children on their homework more than once a month.” Cite research that shows students perform better when their parents are engaged at higher levels than your school is experiencing.</p>
<p><b>Goals and Objectives</b></p>	<p>What do you hope your grant will change? What are your expected outcomes? Are they measurable? A goal is a broad statement of purpose. An objective is a specific, measurable outcome.</p> <p>Goal: Create a school climate where the vast majority of parents take part in school activities and view themselves as active partners in their children’s education.</p> <p>Objective: As a result of our efforts, parent participation in conferences will increase to 70 percent in year two of the project, 80 percent in year three, and 90 percent in year four.</p>
<p><b>Project Design and Activities</b></p>	<p>What specific activities do you propose to fix the problem or address the need? Who are your partners and supporters? What makes you think this will work? Do you have research or best practices to back you up? Be specific about each component. Don’t just tell people you’re going bring more parents in; tell them you’ll host 10 workshops, hold quarterly phone-a-thons with PTA volunteers to get the word out, provide dinner and activities for children, offer great door prizes, etc. You may be asked to include a management plan and timeline. Be specific about who is responsible for which activities.</p>
<p><b>Qualifications</b></p>	<p>What in the background of the individuals or the organizations uniquely qualifies them to do this project? If all the expertise doesn’t exist in your building, with whom will you partner? A local non-profit? A nearby school of education? District staff and city government? Describe the strengths, networks, and experiences each partner will bring to the initiative. If you’ve got a project director or other key staff identified, describe why they are qualified; include resumes if asked.</p>
<p><b>Assessment, Evaluation &amp; Dissemination</b></p>	<p>What will you do to determine your project is working? Assessment should occur during the project, and findings should inform program decisions. Evaluation determines the overall success of the project at an end point, or a logical stopping point, and gives a snap shot for looking at its effectiveness and its potential for growth and replication. If you need to, request money to conduct assessments and evaluations. Have a plan for using assessment data to make mid-course corrections and disseminating evaluation data to colleagues in the field. What will you do with what you’ve learned? How will you let others know? Can you encourage other organizations or communities to take up similar projects? How? Web sites? Professional conferences? Published papers? Media?</p>
<p><b>Budget</b></p>	<p>Be specific and reasonable in requesting costs. Provide details about each budget item. Broad categories include: salaries/wage; benefits; office operations; equipment; supplies; goods and services; contractors; travel; and sometimes indirect costs.</p>

## Research/Scientific Proposals

<b>Research question and its significance</b>	What specific research question(s) are you trying to answer and why is it significant — i.e., what broader implications might there be that could be illuminated by knowledge of this kind?
<b>Activities and research on which current project builds</b>	What research and study has gone before that will inform the work? How are you building on existing knowledge instead of reinventing the wheel?
<b>Proposed methods and activities of current project</b>	What specifically will you collect, observe, measure? What are your research protocols? Is there anything new or innovative in your research approach? Are there any ethical considerations to address?
<b>Experience and capacity of principal investigator(s)</b>	What qualifies the principal investigator(s) to do this project? Describe past experiences, education, access to resources, etc.
<b>Evaluation</b>	How will you evaluate the success of the project? What factors contributed to its successes and/or failures? What steps did you take when faced with problems?
<b>Dissemination</b>	How will you disseminate the actual findings of your project?
<b>Budget</b>	Be specific and reasonable in requesting costs. Provide details about each budget item. Broad categories include: Salaries/Wages & Benefits; Office Operations; Equipment; Supplies; Goods and Services; Contractor Costs; Travel; and sometimes Indirect Costs

## Characteristics of Successful Proposals

Successful proposals:

- Are relevant and significant. (Content trumps everything.)
- Are clear, explain all technical terms, avoid jargon, and use plain English. Good writing prevails.
- Are succinct.
- Use tables and (sparingly) graphics to convey detailed information (responsibilities, timelines, demographic information, etc.)
- Have reasonable (though not necessarily small) budgets.
- Are based in facts and research.
- Avoid overt appeals to emotion.
- Frequently partner two or more organizations.
- Demonstrate management structures to ensure accountability and stewardship of funds.
- Have internal logic:



Goals and objectives address the needs identified; activities are designed to meet those goals and objectives; assessment and evaluation measures the success of the activities in meeting goals and objectives; the budget reflects researched and reasonable costs for the activities proposed, thus closing the circle by showing progress in meeting the needs.

- Tell a good story.

## Types of proposals

### **Letter Proposals**

Some grant applications can be as simple as a letter. I recommend not more than two to three pages in such cases, unless a funder provides a higher limit. These proposals need not have the depth of a full application, but they should cover the same ground in a condensed fashion. Letter proposals usually are for smaller amounts — \$25,000 or less.

### **Letter of Inquiry/Letter of Intent**

You may be asked to submit a letter of inquiry or a letter of intent prior to submitting a full application. A letter of inquiry asks a funder if it is interested in receiving an application from you for a specific project. It then goes on to summarize the project in much the same way as a letter proposal. A letter of intent meets a funder's requirement that it be notified in advance by a certain deadline of your intention to submit a proposal for an upcoming competition; letters of intent can take many formats, from a simple paragraph to a full summary of the proposal. Both should be concise and follow any guidelines provided by the funder.

### **Full Proposals**

Full proposals are lengthier documents, often with prescribed forms. Each funder will have its own requirements. In general, full proposals give you more room to develop the plans for your proposed project. Again, follow the guidelines of the funder and provide all the information requested.

## **Some things to remember:**

Ask yourself: Is this a good candidate for a grant or for a fundraiser? Grants generally want to fix a documented needs with programs built on established research. Fundraisers have fewer strings and are more nimble for small projects. Getting every student a dictionary, taking a great field trip, or bringing guest speakers are all better fundraising projects. Implementing a new reading curriculum or providing ongoing professional development activities with learning objectives is a better grant prospect.

Initial contact: Be sure you find out what kind of initial contact a funding organization accepts. Some want letters of inquiry first; some want letter applications or full applications first. Others want you to call them to inquire before sending mail. Other simply will not accept unsolicited proposal. The Foundation Center online directory provides initial contact protocols for all organizations in their listings.

Always craft your letter or proposal to give the organization exactly what they want in the order that they want it. Generally, it's a good idea not to give them more than they ask for; it frequently doesn't help and it can hurt your chances.

Pay close attention to format requirements (numbers of pages, line spacing, font sizes, page margins). These requirements are almost always firm in a funder's mind, and if you don't follow them, you've provided a very convenient way for them to eliminate you from their pool *before* they've even read your application. If a funder doesn't provide specific formats, a safe approach is 1" margins all around, single spacing with a line between paragraphs, 12 point type in Arial or Times New Roman.

Have an outside person, someone unfamiliar with your project, read your proposal. See if it makes sense to them. Does it say what it needs to in plain English? Does it provide enough detail without overwhelming the reader? Does the prose flow smoothly?

## Resources:

### All Purpose Books:

Bev Browning. 2001. *Grant Writing for Dummies*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Jane C. Geever. 2004. *The Foundation Center's Guide to Proposal Writing*.  
4<sup>th</sup> ed.

Patrick W. Miller. 2000. *Grant Writing: Strategies for Developing Winning Proposals*. Munster, IN: Patrick W. Miller and Associates.

### Web Sites:

**GrantsAlert.com** — an organization whose “is to make life a little easier for those who devote their time to searching for education grants and identifying new funding opportunities;” has fundraising resources, announcements about government and private grants; information about approaching stores and businesses

<http://www.grantsalert.com>

**Fundsnet** — another web resources with lots of links to specific education funders

<http://www.fundsnet.com/education.htm>

**Department of Education Grants and Contracts** — the first stop for all discretionary grant programs with the U.S. Department of Education; follow the link “Looking for Funding?”

<http://www.ed.gov/fund>

**Grants.gov** — the place to find information about almost all federal grant competitions, and increasingly the portal through which to apply for federal funds

<http://www.grants.gov>

**The Foundation Center** — an all-purpose site to find funding organizations and get technical expertise; you can use parts of it for free, but you get more with membership

<http://foundationcenter.org>

**Guide for Writing a Funding Proposal** — a brief and good how-to manual

<http://www.learnerassociates.net/proposal/index.htm>

**Puget Sound Grantwriters Association** — a regional network of grant writers; consider joining if you become a regular grant writer — it's worth the \$75/year; the list serve is a great advice forum

<http://www.grantwriters.org>

**Philanthropy Northwest** — an organization of northwest grant makers; the PNW uniform grant application form is frequently required from foundations in the region

<http://www.philanthropynw.org/default.asp>